

# The Clarendon Building Oxford Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

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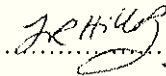
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# The Clarendon Building, Oxford, Oxfordshire

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*On 29th April 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Clarendon Building, Oxford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 5156 0626). The work was commissioned by Oxford University in advance of the excavation of a new ducting trench in the basement of the building. The watching brief revealed the upper most fill of the Civil War ditch of Oxford City and construction levels associated with the Clarendon Building.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 29th April 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Clarendon Building, Oxford, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Oxford University in respect of the excavation of a new service duct in the basement.
- 1.1.2 A project design was agreed after discussions between OA and Brian Durham, the City archaeologist for Oxford.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (OA 2005) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the design.

#### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the junction between Broad Street and Cattle Street, Oxford (NGR: SP 5156 0626). The college lies on level ground at approximately 63.4 m OD. The underlying geology is 1st Terrace River Gravel (BGS Sheet 236).

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 From past experience (Durham *et al* 1983 13-40), it is known that the Clarendon Building, like the Old Ashmolean and part of the Sheldonian, was constructed within the newly filled medieval town ditch, but with main foundations that go down to load bearing geology at the bottom of the ditch. The evidence as discussed by Mellor (Durham *et al* 1983, 30-32) was that the ditch had been emptied during the Civil War in the 1640s, and therefore the surviving fill relates to the next ten years, the finds within it reflecting possibly a higher standard of living while the court was in residence during the siege of Oxford. Fill deposits beneath the footprint of the prestigious buildings raised on the reclaimed ditch therefore represent one of the best "closed groups" in the city, and this gives the present finds added significance.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench was hand excavated through the floor of the basement and was carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the excavations and any archaeological features was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and the sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The trench was 30 m long by 0.8 m wide and excavated to between 0.3 m - 0.4 m in depth. It had a number of spurs running off the main trench, one of which led to a pit measuring 2 m x 1.25 m x 1.10 m, dug to contain the transformer for the emergency lighting (Fig. 3, section 4). This cut 0.9 m deep into the top of a layer of grey-brown silty sand loam (6). This contained limestone fragments and many ceramic, bone and clay pipe fragments. Its location and the narrow date range of the finds suggests that this was the upper layer of backfill within the city's civil war defensive ditch.
- 3.1.2 This fill had been cut by a foundation trench (8), measuring 0.6 m wide by 0.4 m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. This contained a limestone and mortar wall (7), which was originally part of the Clarendon Building. This was sealed below a levelling layer of light grey brown silty sand (5), which produced mortar flecking, limestone fragments, animal bone and clay pipe stems and which was probably associated with the construction of the Clarendon Building (Fig. 3, sections 3, 4, 5 and 6). Overlying this was a series of hardcore bases (2 and 3) for the stone slab floor (4) and concrete floor (1) of the basement (Fig. 3, sections 1 to 6).

## 3.2 Finds

### ***The Pottery, Clay Pipes and Bottle Glass*** **by John Cotter (OA)**

3.2.1 All the material described below is from context (6), the post-medieval back-filling of the city ditch.

#### ***The Pottery***

3.2.2 A total of 28 sherds of pottery weighing 1668 g. were recovered. The pottery consists mainly of 17th century types although one or two pieces could be of late 17th or early 18th century date. The pottery can be broken down into the following groups.

3.2.3 *Tin-glazed Earthenware (3 sherds)*. Probably London products. Three separate vessels are represented. The latest piece is a rim of plain tapering form from a flattish dish/plate with traces of blue-painted decoration including a double borderline and possible floral decoration within this. English dishes of this form, usually with a plain flat base, date from c 1670 onwards but are more typical of the 18th century. The second piece is a rim sherd from a large dish or 'charger' with curving walls and a plain flattened rim. The interior is decorated with blue-painted floral or debased 'Wan Li' designs copied from Chinese porcelain. This design is typical of many 17th century chargers including examples excavated from deposits dated by the Great Fire of London in 1666. The third piece represents the complete base and profile of a miniature ointment pot or apothecary jar (30 mm. high). It is undecorated and has a waisted form typical of the first half of the 17th century.

3.2.4 *German Stoneware (7 sherds)*. Brown salt-glazed stoneware from Cologne or Frechen in north-west Germany. Representing a minimum of three jugs of typical bellarmine or *bartmann* form with an applied bearded mask on the neck below the rim and other applied moulded decoration on the body. One example is from the base of a girth-band jug with a bearded classical bust in profile within a roundel. This latter type is typical of the period c 1550-75. Another jug rim/shoulder sherd has a finely moulded (complete) mask and traces of heraldic roundel applied to the globular body beneath this. The mask is typical of *bartmann* jugs produced in the 1590s and the early 17th century and is a fine example of this type. One other plain rim/handle sherd probably dates to the mid or later 17th century.

3.2.5 *Surrey/Hampshire Border Ware (3 sherds)*. A fine white sandy ware usually with a clear (yellow) or green glaze. This was produced at sites along the Surrey/Hampshire border between the mid-16th century and the early 18th century (Pearce 1992). Three vessels are represented. The most interesting piece is a substantially complete 'chicken feeder', a shallow dish-like form with several concentric rings or rims and a flat base (Pearce 1992, fig. 17; fig. 46.449). These were first wheel-thrown as a plain shallow dish and then had additional thrown rings applied within the main dish. In this case four additional rings have been applied giving a total of five. About two-

thirds of the vessel circumference survives, with the outermost ring badly damaged and lacking its rim, while the two innermost rings have survived complete. The maximum surviving diameter is 200 mm. and the maximum height is 28 mm. The flat base, which is knife-trimmed, is spalled or badly flaked in places. The upper surface is covered with a clear yellow glaze. This is quite a rare post-medieval ceramic form and, despite some damage, the present example is quite well preserved. Although there has been some doubt cast on the true function of these earlier examples, there is no doubt that vessels of identical form were used as chicken feeders on farms in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The two remaining Border ware vessels, both green-glazed, represent a heavily beaded bowl rim and a body sherd possibly from a jug.

- 3.2.6 *Red and Pink-Buff earthenware's (14 sherds)*. These are likely to be of relatively local manufacture but might include products of the post-medieval Brill (Bucks) pottery industry, as well as Red Border ware from the Surrey/Hampshire border potteries. The forms represented are typical domestic pottery forms of the 17th to early 18th centuries and include jars, plain and handled bowls, drinking cups and a hollow pedestal base from either a jug or a chafing dish (plate warmer). Some pieces are covered with a clear orange or brownish-green glaze. A handled drinking vessel (or 'tyg') is covered with a black glaze.
- 3.2.7 *Late Medieval Green-Glazed Ware (1 sherd)*. A single body sherd in a sandy pink-buff fabric with a very pale grey core. Both surfaces are covered with a copper-stained green glaze suggesting it may be from a cup or drinking vessel. Possibly an Oxfordshire or Brill/Boarstall (Bucks) product of the later 14th to early 16th century. Residual.

### ***The Clay Pipes***

- 3.2.8 A total of 88 fragments of clay pipe weighing 620 g. were recovered. Of these 25 were pipe bowls (mostly complete) and 63 were stems. Most of the bowls (12 examples) are types dating to c 1640-60, or slightly earlier in the case of one or two examples. Ten examples date to c 1660-80. One tall slender example dates to c 1700-40 though perhaps early in this range as it has a good quality all over burnish and a broad circular heel. Two other heel fragments are from otherwise undiagnostic 17th century pipes. Most of the c 1640-60 bowl types are heeled but two are spurred. Five of the c 1660-80 pipe bowls are spurred. Two of the c 1640-60 pipe bowls have a maker's mark stamped on the heel. On the complete example the stamp is a lozenge containing two diagonal lines (in relief) which divide it into four smaller lozenges. On the other, damaged, example the stamp appears to represent an armoured gauntlet with scales or chain-mail indicated; the lower third of the heel is missing breaking the gauntlet off at the wrist. Stamped types are generally rare in Oxford.

### ***Bottle Glass***

- 3.2.9 A total of 5 sherds of glass weighing 550 g. were recovered. These represent the bases and lower walls of two separate onion-shaped wine bottles in green glass. They

have a thick-walled globular form with a pruned base and are typical of the later 17th and early 18th centuries.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

3.2.10 This assemblage of pottery, clay pipes and bottle glass dates mainly to the 17th century with an emphasis on the second half of the century. One or two pieces however appear to date to the early 18th century. One or two imported German stoneware vessels date to the later 16th century and may represent curated vessels or heirlooms. A single late medieval potsherd is clearly residual. The assemblage is entirely domestic in character and, in the main, not particularly remarkable. The only exception to this is the Surrey/Hampshire Border ware 'chicken feeder' which is quite a rare post-medieval pottery type and is in a relatively complete condition. The two 17th century pipe bowls with maker's marks are also notable. A German stoneware bellarmine mask of c 1600, while not particularly rare, is well-preserved and a good example of its type. The 'chicken feeder' is worthy of possible museum display.

### **3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The finds recovered from the upper backfill of the ditch lie within a narrow date range of between the late 17th century and the early 18th century. These dates suggests that this deposit represents a deliberate effort to backfill the Civil War town defensive ditch, which is known to lie in this location (Mellor and Durham in Durham *et al* 1983, 30-32). This action was probably taken in order to prepare and level the site in readiness for building work.

4.1.2 It is probable that the lowest layers of backfill within this ditch would represent occupation debris dating to between 1640 and 1650, followed by redeposited material from the associated ramparts, while the final levelling layers of backfill would be composed of domestic refuse and possibly imported soils. The depth of the excavations during this watching brief was such that only this final layer was exposed.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.18 m	-	Concrete floor	-	C20th
2	Layer	> 0.15 m	-	Floor make up	-	C18th/C19th
3	Layer	0.14 m	-	Floor make up	-	C20th
4	Layer	0.075 m	1.5 m	Stone slab Floor	-	C18th/C19th
5	Layer	0.16 m	-	Make up and levelling layer	Pottery, Bone and Clay pipe	C18th
6	Fill	> 0.9 m	-	Backfill of Civil War ditch	Pottery, Bone and Clay pipe	C17th/C18th
7	Structure	0.4 m	0.6 m	Wall	-	C18th
8	Cut	0.4 m	0.6 m	Foundation trench	-	C18th

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Durham B, Halpin C, Palmer N, 1983 *Oxford's Northern Defences: Archaeological Studies 1971-1982. Oxoniensia XLVII*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

OA, 2005 *The Clarendon Building, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Pearce, J., 1992 *Border Wares* (London: HMSO).

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** The Clarendon Building, Oxford, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** OXCLA 05

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 5156 0626

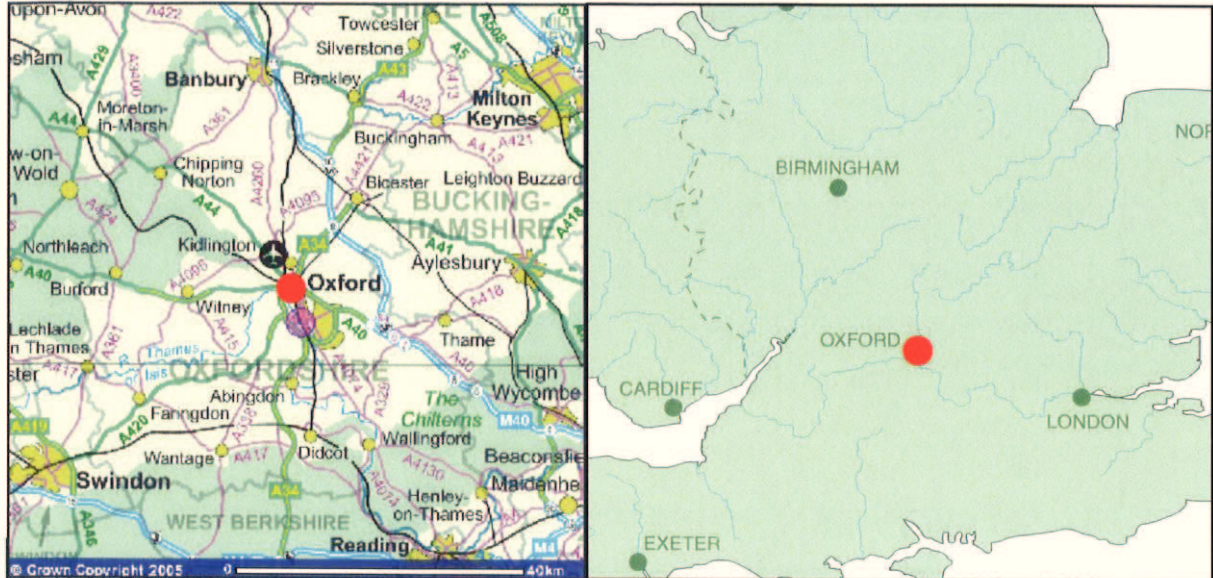
**Type of watching brief:** Excavation of service duct in basement.

**Date and duration of project:** One visit on the 29/4/05.

**Area of site:** 30 m x 0.8 m x 0.4 m

**Summary of results:** The watching brief revealed the upper most fill of the Civil War ditch of Oxford city.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2005.71



Scale 1: 1000

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Figure 1: Site location

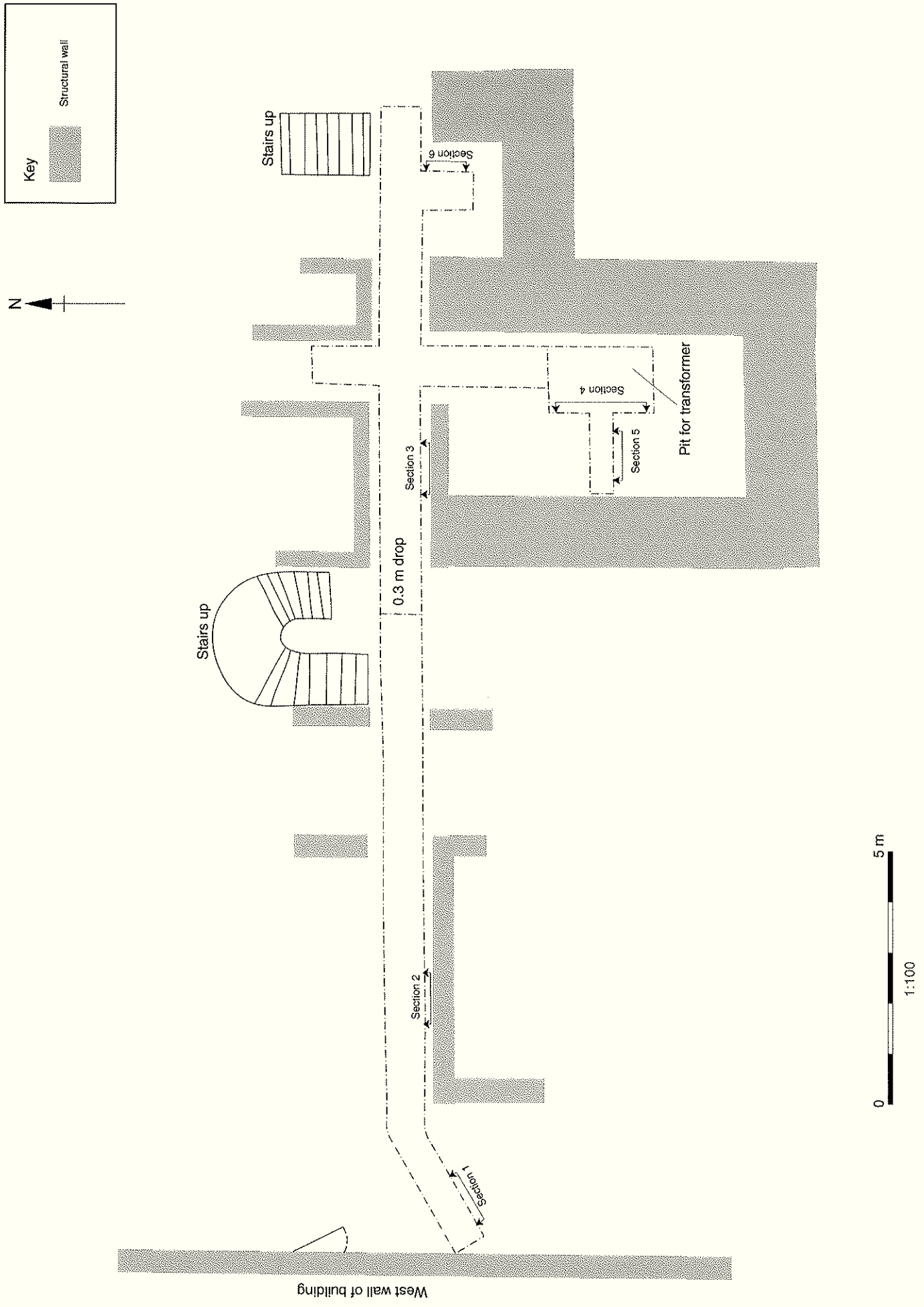


Figure 2: Plan of excavations

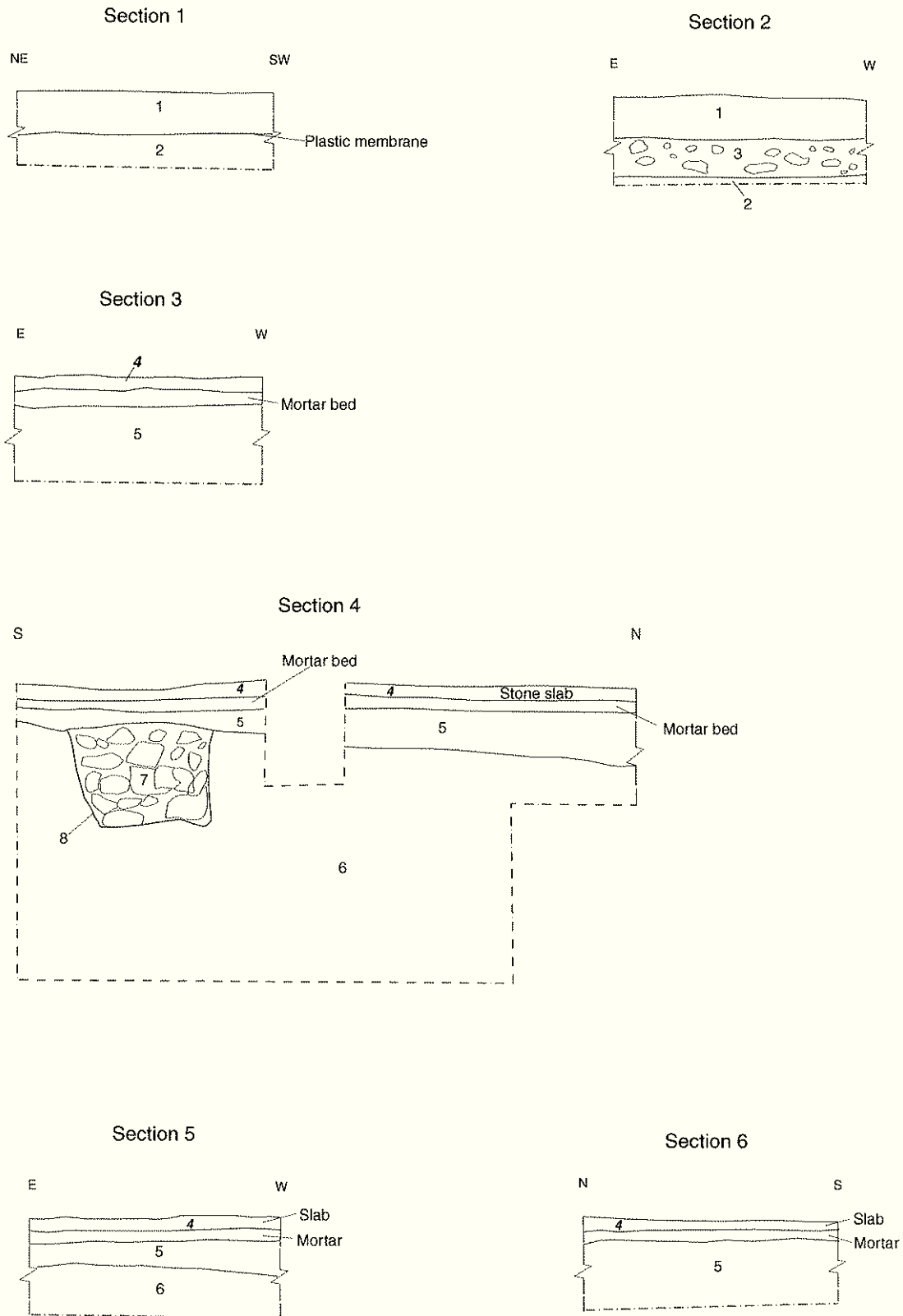


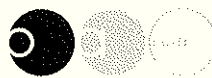
Figure 3: Sections 1 - 6



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